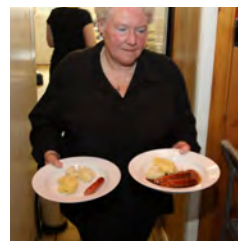




community  
food and health  
(scotland)

# A bite and a blether

CASE STUDIES FROM  
SCOTLAND'S LUNCH CLUBS



**Eating lunch with others is something we all do. Lunch clubs that bring people together to do this have been around a long time and those targeted at older people provide a key piece in the jigsaw of services that support older people living in their own homes to eat well.**

The dictionary definition suggests there are two main models of lunch clubs- a social welfare model predominantly aimed at older people and a 'shared interest' model where groups of people get together to network. In fact an internet search throws up a whole range of models – from social networking opportunities for people working at home, to school lunch clubs, healthy lunch clubs, and office lunch clubs.

The basic model is the same. There is the opportunity to have a meal, often an affordably priced meal, outside of the home and there is also the opportunity to meet with others in a social setting. For older people living on their own both can be equally important.

This publication focuses on lunch clubs for older people in Scotland. There are lunch clubs in communities in every corner of the country. The different ways they operate reflects the rich diversity of different communities and the resources they have to work with. It also reflects an enormous volunteer effort, most often by older people themselves, who give their time and talents to support friends and neighbours.

## luncheon club

*n*

1. (Social Welfare) *Social welfare* (in Britain) an arrangement or organisation for serving hot midday meals for a small charge to old people in clubs or daycentres

2. a society or group of people who meet regularly for an organised lunch *a ladies' luncheon club*

Collins English Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003



# Lunch Club Outcomes

Recent research suggests that lunch clubs are highly valued by their members. When asked what they enjoy about attending their lunch club, older people tend to talk about two main things - the food and the opportunity to get together with others.

## An affordable nutritious meal

Lunch clubs are a way to have a meal, usually an affordable meal, outside of the home. For a number of older people a lunch club meal is their only freshly cooked food in a week and some of those interviewed said that it is usually their main meal on the day that they attend.

While the nutritional value of lunch club meals is limited by the fact that clubs often meet just once or twice a week, most clubs are concerned that the food they serve is healthy and nutritious. Often it will meet standards set for either school catering or community meals. As such lunch club meals can play a role in supporting older people to eat a nutritious diet.

## The opportunity to meet with others

Equally important is the fact that meals are eaten outside of the home and with others, providing the opportunity for social contact and being out and about in the local community.

*“could be in the house all week and not see a soul”*

*“It’s for the companionship as well as the novelty of having someone else cook; it’s nice to have someone cook for you”<sup>1</sup>*

This social aspect is particularly important for minority ethnic communities where members value the opportunity to get together with people who share a common language and culture.

## Being active

Some clubs have additional activities alongside lunch. Exercise sessions can impact on levels of physical activity. Information sessions e.g. stroke awareness can impact on managing long term conditions. Benefits information can impact on overall income levels, and electric blanket testing on overall safety and security. Older people who work as volunteers speak of being involved in ‘something useful’, ‘giving something back to their community’ and being active.

Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative have produced a logic model for their lunch clubs<sup>2</sup>. This lists medium term outcomes from their lunch clubs as - participation in meaningful activity, improved physical health, relationships, discrimination and poverty.

These contribute to long term outcomes in terms of improved health and well being in later life and reduction in health inequalities across their project areas. Substantial outcomes for relatively small inputs.



<sup>1</sup> Lunch club members interviewed for Food Services for Older people in the Community study 2011

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1

# Lunch Club Essentials

There are **four** essential elements to a lunch club – members, food, venue, staff/ volunteers. Most clubs, especially in rural areas, also offer some form of transport to and from the venue.

## 1 Members

Lunch clubs vary as to how they recruit their members. Many are open to the whole community with older people being encouraged to join via local advertising or word of mouth. Some are only open to older people referred by social work services or their GP. Some operate on a membership basis where members pay an annual fee.

## 2 Food

This can often be supplied by the local authority via school kitchens or their meal supplier. Food can also come from local caterers or a local community café. In some areas, lunch clubs are meeting in local pubs and hotels that provide a meal to order.

Lunch clubs that meet in premises with equipped kitchens often prepare meals in-house using paid or volunteer staff. This may be a full meal or a soup and sandwich. Some clubs have gradually built up their stock of kitchen equipment through grants and fundraising.

Charges for meals vary but are usually within the range of £2- £4. Charges are usually set to cover costs.

Meals are anything from soup and a sandwich, followed by tea and biscuits to a full meal consisting of chicken or red meat, vegetables and potatoes or meat or vegetable curry, rice, chapatti, salad and yoghurt with a choice of pudding or fruit salad. In most clubs, it is a set menu with little choice and while some can cater for specific dietary requirements this is not always the case.

Some clubs have a particular focus on healthy food. The Sunlite Café has been awarded the healthyliving award plus and people who come

to their lunch club chose from the café's main menu which always includes healthy choices. Food that comes from school kitchens will usually meet nutritional standards outlined for schools.

**The healthyliving award is a national award for the food service sector in Scotland. It rewards food outlets that are working hard to fill their menus with healthier food, and makes it easier for customers to know where to go for healthier food choices.**

**Certain conditions need to be met to achieve the award. These are based on the general principles of a healthy balanced diet with promotion and marketing activities to support these principles.**

**The healthyliving award plus is a higher level award for those outlets that have held the standard award for 2 years and are ready for a bigger challenge.**

## 3 Venue

Lunch clubs meet in a wide range of venues. Community centres, church halls, community cafes, day centres, sheltered housing schemes, restaurants and pubs.

Basic requirements of a venue are tables, chairs, and where possible use of equipment to serve food. Some lunch clubs have used disposable plates and cutlery until such time as they have been able to get their own.

The cost of the venue, and where required, public liability insurance, is something that most clubs factor into their membership fees or the cost of the meals.



LOSSIEMOUTH SENIOR  
CITIZENS LUNCHEON CLUB

#### 4 Staff/ Volunteers

All clubs need people to set up, prepare and serve food and clear away after the meal. These can be paid staff or volunteers and are often a mixture of both. Some clubs also use volunteer drivers to provide all or some of the transport either via community transport or volunteer driver schemes. The WRVS calculates that it requires 13 hours of volunteer time to run one of its lunch club sessions.

Volunteers will usually be checked under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme and are often offered training in food hygiene and sometimes first aid.

Lunch clubs that are volunteer-run also require volunteers to take part in their management committees and be involved in the day to day running and administration of the lunch club. This can be arranging meals, raising and managing funds, dealing with hall or room bookings, building links to other organisations and statutory agencies in the area.

#### Additional considerations

Most lunch clubs usually need a small amount of funding to get up and running. This may be to cover basic equipment, insurance, volunteer checks, training, and publicity. Training will often include basic food hygiene, food and health, first aid. Funding is often supplied via local community planning/ health partnerships or local trusts. Some clubs hold fundraising events to cover additional costs.

Most also benefit from some ongoing level of support. This may be limited to someone to call on if they hit issues that they find difficult to deal with or may involve assistance with bookkeeping, training volunteers, and making funding applications.

# Lunch Club Models

There are probably as many different models of lunch clubs as there are communities in Scotland. There are six main models as outlined below and illustrated by the examples that follow.

## Local Authority

The local authority identifies the need for a lunch club in a particular community. It will usually take place in a community centre/ community hall or a local day centre. The food will be provided by the local authority, either cooked by local authority staff on the premises, or delivered from a local school. The local authority will often provide transport for people to attend the lunch club, dropping them home afterwards and staff will look after people while they are at the club. Club members will pay a charge which usually covers the cost of the food. The local authority will cover staffing and transport costs.

This model, once widespread across the country, is now less common given the financial constraints local authorities are working with.

## Voluntary/ Community organisation

A voluntary or community organisation supports the operation of a lunch club in a particular area. This may be a national voluntary organisation such as the WRVS or a voluntary or community organisation that provides a lunch club as part of its wider work. Local churches and faith groups often operate this model. Housing associations also sometimes offer lunch clubs in their sheltered housing schemes.



These clubs are often run in partnership with the local authority which may provide a venue, funding, transport and/ or meals. The voluntary/ community organisation provides staff time to do the day to day management and running of the club. This is often a mix of paid staff and volunteers.

## Community run

These are local groups constituted primarily to provide a lunch club. Alyth Senior Citizen's Lunch and Socialising Club is an example of such a group, as are the groups working across the Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network.

These lunch clubs have often been set up in response to needs identified by the local community or other organisations working in the area. They will typically have had some start up support in terms of funding for equipment, covering initial costs e.g. hall hire, insurance, becoming a constituted organisation and benefit from ongoing low level support. They are planned and managed by a committee of local people and the day to day running will be carried out by volunteers. In Alyth, a small grant covers the cost of a cook to coordinate the cooking but everything else is covered by volunteers, all of whom are older people themselves.

Transport is provided by volunteer drivers and/ or community transport.

## Community of interest

Lunch clubs develop to cater for the needs of a specific group of older people. The Minority Ethnic Day Care Activity Centre was set up to meet the specific needs of the South Asian population in South Glasgow for a gender segregated service and food and activities that cater for cultural and religious requirements. Lunch clubs can be important places where older people from minority ethnic communities can get together, share food and meet others from a shared cultural background. They are often part of a wider service to older people provided by a voluntary or community organisation and may receive some support from the local authority. Clubs will usually

prepare their own food or in some cases local community caterers will take turns to supply the food for lunch clubs. Often members will be drawn from a wider geographical area.

## Community Cafés

Community cafés will usually provide a lunchtime service focusing on offering affordable meals to all. Some extend this to running a lunch club or providing food for a lunch club which another organisation runs in their premises. The manager of Café Pearce in Glasgow described providing food for a lunch club for residents of a local housing association

*"its a win, win... residents get a healthy meal and Café Pearce's takings have their best day of the week."*

## Private sector

The private sector plays a role in providing lunch clubs especially in rural areas where meeting facilities may be limited. Clubs may often meet in a local restaurant or pub which provides a meal at an agreed price. Meals are often pre-ordered by lunch club members and paid for on the day.

Lunch clubs in pubs have been developed in some parts of the country to specifically appeal to older men although clearly these are not appropriate for all communities. Some private caterers take it in turns to supply lunch clubs for members of the Chinese or South Asian community.



# Lunch Club Examples

## Lossiemouth Senior Citizens Luncheon Club<sup>1</sup>

Lossiemouth is a coastal town with a population of 6,873 of which 950 are over the age of 65. This club has been running for 25 years and used to meet at Buckie Community Centre. It is a constituted club with a committee of seven



members and a chair. They have regular meetings. The club is run entirely by volunteers including those who help on the minibus. The youngest volunteer is in her late 50's.

and committee immediately started looking elsewhere for a suitable venue and more realistic cost. They identified the Beach Bar, a restaurant and bar venue whose owner was sympathetic and offered to do two-course meals for £4 per person every Tuesday and Thursday lunchtime. Her local food suppliers were also very supportive.

The club uses the Senior Citizen's Trust bus to transport people to and from the lunch club, and also take people shopping or to another club in the afternoon. There is a charge of 50p per person for the bus service.

There are 32 club members with around 20-25 attending each meal. Membership is open to anyone living in Lossiemouth or the surrounding area that is over 60. Around two thirds are women, and one third men. Carers are welcomed to support those who are less able. Members report that the meals at the Beach Bar are very good, and there is an added bonus of being able to buy a drink at the bar. The menus are provided beforehand and there is flexibility for dietary considerations. Staff at the bar have made efforts to provide special menus for birthdays and did a full Christmas lunch. This was laid out with table plans as for a wedding, a seasonal drink was given free to everyone, everyone had a present and there was a raffle. As a surprise, a small choir from the school came along and sang Christmas songs. A local businessman sponsored the extra costs of the Christmas lunch.



In early 2009, the club was told by their local authority that the cost of meals could go up to as much as £9 per head. The chair



<sup>1</sup> This case study was developed by Moray Handyperson Service for the Food Services for Older People in the Community study 2011





## The Sunlite Café

The Sunlite Café operates in the Cowane Centre in Stirling. It is a community café that is open to all Monday to Friday offering healthy snacks, lunches and outside catering. It is run by Lets Make it Better - a user-led mental health charity. The café offers wholesome food at reasonable prices to the local community. The café is run by volunteers many of whom have severe and enduring mental health challenges and have overcome severe barriers to have the opportunity of training and experience of working in the café.

The Sunlite Café was awarded the healthy living award in 2008 and the healthy living award plus award on 10 September 2010. Everyone involved in the café is very proud of this achievement.

The café operates a lunch club one day per week for residents from a nearby residential home. The average age of the people who come along is 85 and some come along with their support workers.

They have their lunch in the café along with other users and choose a three course meal from the café menu. This will usually be soup, followed by a main course and a dessert. The café aims to offer a range of tasty, healthy food and the members of the lunch club enjoy a wide variety of dishes.

The café also sells fruit and vegetables from a small retail unit. This is sourced from a local supplier and the lunch club members will often buy fruit while they are in the café to take back home with them.

In addition to catering for this lunch club, the café also produces soup twice a week which is delivered to another lunch club. They have also recently won the contract to supply other rural lunch clubs with soup and may be about to take on another lunch club.

***“they like a fish tea which we can provide but it won’t be fried... and no chips!”***

Fiona Hamilton, Cafe Manager

The club stops during July, when a summer club is run for a maximum of 15 people. Every Tuesday they go out for the day in the mini-bus. This costs £4 each. There is a lunch stop at a different place each week and everyone pays for their own food.

The club is also active in raising money for their various activities. As well as raffles, they take over the local charity shop for two weeks every July. They pay for the use of the building and the electricity used. In 2010 they made a clear profit of £800.

The chair of the club is a driving force and believes variety and good organisation is the key to the success of the club. An annual calendar of events is drawn up and given to all members. At the moment the club along with the Senior Citizen’s Trust are struggling for drivers and support volunteers on the bus and the chair feels that sometimes the members do not appreciate the amount of time and effort that goes into running a club of this calibre. There are no younger volunteers coming on board. This could indicate problems of continuance should the current chair have to withdraw from the club for any reason.

## Alyth Senior Citizen's Lunch and Socialising Club (ASCLSC)

*"The Healthy Communities Collaborative is such a good idea. A small number of professionals working in partnership with unlimited numbers of volunteers, enabling (through the Lunch Club and Exercise Groups) older people to stay fitter and healthier for longer, has to be good!"*

Pat Kendall, Committee Member

*It's Valentine's Day in Alyth. In Airlie St hall the tables are set with red and white checked table cloths, there are red roses on each table and a love heart at each place setting. In the kitchen, volunteers are having a quick bite to eat having finished their preparations and at the door the treasurer has her cash box and register of members to the ready.*

*Gradually the room fills with 80 older people, members of the Alyth Senior Citizen's Lunch and Socialising Club (ASCLSC). They meet for lunch twice a month in the winter and once a month in the summer. In weeks where there is no lunch club, members can join in an exercise session in the hall.*

equipment came from a local wind farm development and the group continues to raise its own funds to buy equipment and cover overheads.

*Lunch consists of soup and filled rolls, biscuits and tea or coffee. The emphasis is on simple healthy food that can be prepared relatively easily. Kitchen facilities in the hall limit what can be cooked, although on special occasions e.g. Christmas, Burns Night, a full meal is provided. Ingredients come as much as possible from local shops. Members comment on the quality of the food – the fact that the soup is wholesome and that they sometimes take the rolls home to eat later. Several members said they wouldn't normally cook on days they come for lunch.*

The club was set up three years ago with support from Perth and Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative (PKHCC). PKHCC works with a 'community action' model setting up area teams which bring together local older people and professionals to work on particular topics. A focus on mental health and wellbeing in later life has generated work around the five main areas found to influence this – discrimination, poverty, relationships, physical health and participation in meaningful activity. The club was developed by Alyth members for the Area team following a survey of older people in the area.

The club started with two volunteers who expected a few people to arrive for their first lunch. Forty five came along on the first day and the club now has 109 members out of a local population of around 2000. Members pay £2 for their lunch together with an annual membership fee of £1. The club is run by a constituted committee. Start up support came from PKHCC, funding for some of the

Food provides the reason for getting together but the club is about much more than food. It works on a number of levels – providing social opportunities, opportunities for getting involved, links into other activities taking part in the local area and useful information. It works to reduce isolation, increase confidence, skills, capacity and build community spirit.

Members all speak about enjoying the opportunity to meet up with friends and neighbours, to sit down together and catch up. The club keeps a register of members so that anyone who hasn't been for a while can be followed up. For older people who are new to the area or who suddenly find themselves on their own it is the place to build links and find out about the wide range of local activities members are involved in. A lot of thought has gone into how to encourage older men to use and contribute to the club and also how to work in an inclusive way such as welcoming a local care worker with a couple of the people she

supports. The link to PKHCC provides access to stalls and information that will be relevant to members e.g. stroke recognition, benefits, and electric blanket testing.

All of this involves a huge volunteer effort. The club has 35 regular volunteers, all older people themselves, who work on a rota supporting the cook in the kitchen, serving food front of house, setting up tables and washing up, keeping the books and sitting on the committee. A usual volunteer shift for the lunch club is 9.30am – 2.30pm and each session involves four or five volunteers. Volunteer drivers are available to provide a lift for anyone who needs one. Volunteers speak of different reasons for being involved. One described helping out as her way of putting something back into the community that supported her when her husband died soon after they arrived in Alyth.

Alyth Senior Citizen's Lunch and Socialising Club is an example of work by older people in small rural communities to provide food and social activities for older people in their community. The role of PKHCC is crucial in bringing people together, providing initial developmental support, a tried and tested way of working and ongoing low level support.

*By 2.30pm, the dishes are washed, the hall is cleared and club members are moving on. Another successful session contributing to the overall health and well being of older people in this rural community.*

*“They put on special occasions for us, such as a wonderful Christmas lunch with all the trimmings and entertainment, free Easter egg raffle, also a special Burns lunch with haggis and Scottish music... This is all thought up and produced by the volunteers. The organisation of all this is really splendid. We would all be very sorry if the lunches were to stop.”*  
Letter from club members



## The Dixon Community Minority Ethnic Day Care Activity Centre

The Minority Ethnic Day Activity Centre is part of the Dixon Community, a voluntary organisation in Govanhill Glasgow. A resource for frail older people from the minority ethnic community, it is designed to be a place where older people can enjoy the company of friends and neighbours, have their rights fully catered for and where their cultural and religious needs are recognised and observed.

It is an example of a service designed to cater for the specific needs of older people from the South Asian community – particularly the need for gender segregated services, and food and activities that cater for cultural and religious requirements.

The centre has a full time paid staff of six and two sessional workers. It operates for ladies on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and for men on Wednesday and Friday. Individuals and families can request places and referrals are also taken from GPs and social work services.

Lunch is provided for around 30 members a day and in 2010 the centre served a total of 6,650 meals. The lunch is seen as an integral part of the work of the centre – providing the opportunity for members to enjoy a healthy nutritious hot meal in the company of friends.

The centre has a cook five days a week and a standard meal on three days will consist of a choice of meat or vegetable curry, rice, chapatti, salad and yoghurt with a pudding or fruit salad for desert. One day a week food is bought in from Cordia - Glasgow City Council's meal provider, and on the other a more limited menu of light snacks is available. All meals are provided for under £2.

The focus is on encouraging members to eat healthier options and care is taken to reduce salt and fat levels in meals, grilling rather than frying food and making sure that salad and fruit is always available. The meal can be an important part of nutrition for older people attending the centre especially those who live alone. Men who attend the centre are more likely to ask for healthy options and be careful about what they eat. Meals can be cooked to cater for individual needs.

Staff and volunteers also help out when they can with shopping for members who live alone and have difficulty accessing shops. The centre has an outreach befriending service providing friendship and home support for older people who are housebound or isolated living in the community.





## Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network

Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network was set up in 2002, the result of a community consultation that identified high levels of physical and social isolation among older people in the Mearns and coastal area of rural south Aberdeenshire. It aims to promote a healthier, happier way of life for older people mobilising volunteers to provide a range of practical services while also building relationships and a new sense of community spirit.

The organisation has worked with local people to develop four lunch clubs across south Aberdeenshire – in Laurencekirk, Fettercairn, Inverbervie and Auchenblae. All are run by volunteers, operate from local community centres or village halls, and meet once a week catering for anything between 10 and 40 members.

Members join the clubs via word of mouth and local advertising. Social work services also refer people to the clubs. Over half of the members are over 75 years old. There is a good mix of male and female members.

The clubs are set up around the lunch and the food plays an important role in making sure older people eat well. The impact of the clubs on food and nutrition is limited by the fact that they only take place once a week but for many members the meal they have at the lunch club is their only freshly cooked meal of the week. The meal for three of the clubs comes from the local school and is a two or three course lunch with tea or coffee loosely based on the school meal of the day. The fourth club prepares its own meals on the premises, usually soup with a pudding.

Of equal, and perhaps greater, importance is the role the clubs play in breaking down social isolation. Many members live in remote, isolated settings and getting together with others, sitting down with them to eat a meal and chat is a highlight of the week. All of the clubs will have other activities alongside the lunch from time to time, but the real value of the clubs is in building the relationships, making the connections that build community.

Some members come along just for lunch, but most come for the whole day. Transport is important as many members are too frail to make their own way to the centre. The centre has a bus and a driver that picks members up from around 9.45am dropping them home again after 3pm. The main focus of the centre's activity is on health and wellbeing. Exercise classes and yoga are available three times a week and there are information and focus group sessions on a range of health topics such as dementia, diabetes, and stress reduction. Members are also involved in a wide range of activities including arts, crafts, history projects, films and outings are arranged throughout the year to places of interest in and around Glasgow.

The centre is funded by Glasgow Community Planning Partnership and is part of the overall provision provided by the Dixon Community. The centre has its own users group which meets monthly to deal with any issues, plan outings, and co-ordinate the fundraising that is needed to keep different activities running. This committee would deal with any concerns in relation to food and the chair of this group sits on the main Dixon Community Board. The centre uses volunteers to help with serving meals, drinks, activities and home visiting although it is finding it harder to recruit volunteers. All volunteers, full time and part time staff are registered with Disclosure Scotland.



One lunch club member is new to the area and lives in sheltered housing. Although they have social gatherings there she says she tends to meet the same people all the time. Coming to the lunch club has not only allowed her to meet more people but has made her feel much more part of the community. She says:

***“It’s lovely to meet new people and I find that if I meet them in the street they will say hello and that’s important to me because I don’t belong to this area.”***

Running the lunch clubs involves a huge volunteer effort and the Network plays a key role in the initial development and co-ordination of this. The lunch club in Laurencekirk runs with four or five volunteers at the hall, a volunteer bus driver and other volunteer drivers who provide transport for members. This represents at least 20 hours of volunteer time a week with committee work, fundraising, administration on top of this. The Network believes there would be a demand for the clubs to run more than one day a week, but feel that it would be impossible to do this relying solely on volunteers.

Support available to clubs covers basic committee skills, recruitment training and induction of volunteers, setting up systems for food ordering and finance, ongoing administration. The standard constitution that the Network suggest, ensures that all committees have lunch club members on them so that members have a direct role in decision

making about the club. Committees are usually self sustaining within two years, but this early low level development support is important to their ongoing success.

The Network continues to have a role in providing the bus that is used for transport to and from the lunch clubs. Transport is crucial to the running of all of the clubs. In the main villages, some members may be able to walk to the lunch club, but the majority of members live in outlying areas and would not be able to get to the hall without transport.

The lunch clubs are self supporting financially. Members pay £3.50 for their lunch which covers the cost of the meal and the hire of the hall. The clubs had some start-up funding from their local Health Improvement fund and now raise the additional money they need to keep going from trusts and local fundraising. The committee in Laurencekirk has some funding from trusts that allows them to buy some administrative support from the Network.

***“Lunch clubs with a bit of support at the start are a really good example of sustainable groups which can make a real difference to older people in particular, but also to anyone in the community who wants to come along. The clubs we’re involved with continue to go from strength to strength. Each club has its own characteristics depending on the members and volunteers involved which makes for a really robust, dynamic model.”***

Ed Garrett, Manager of the MCHLN

## Castlemilk Pensioners Action Centre

Castlemilk Pensioners Action Centre has been working with older people in the Castlemilk area of Glasgow since 1986. It currently has 430 members, 25% of whom are men.

The centre encourages learning and participation and is described by its manager as a 'youth club for the elderly'. It offers a wide range of activities within the centre together with regular outings, holidays and regular social events in the evening.

Central to the centre's activities is a community café where members can meet for breakfast and lunch five days a week Monday – Friday. This is seen as the hub of the centre, where people meet for lunch before moving on to different activities.

Up to 100 members a day come along for lunch. Transport is provided for those who cannot make their own way and links have been established with local housing associations and residential homes to ensure the centre remains open to people as their needs change. The café is also open to the wider community to ensure mixing between the generations. Members are encouraged to bring along friends and family members.

Lunches for members cost £2 for two courses and there is a choice of five main courses each day together with homemade soup and a choice of deserts. There is always a vegetarian option and if members have particular requirements these can be catered for. The menu is member led and members are surveyed three times a year for feedback.

Meals are cooked on site and can be produced at such a low cost because of relationships that have been built up over the years with local suppliers. Glasgow City Council provides a subsidy of 28p for every two course meal.

The food is important to all members and for most will be their main meal of the day. Some 60 -70 members will attend every day and for them the café is their major source of food. This is particularly so for many of the men who attend who say that they do not cook at home.

The centre has a core staff supported by 24 volunteers – 22 of whom are over 70 years old. Six or seven volunteers help in the café each day serving food and washing dishes and most offer around four hours a session. The centre receives half of its core funding from the city council via social work services and community planning, raising the other half from grants and trusts. A recent cut in funding has led to a reduction in paid hours for some of the staff, but they have continued to work additional hours voluntarily to ensure that the centre remains open.

The centre is currently exploring possibilities for new premises. Key to their requirements is the space to upgrade and expand their café facility. The centre is also starting to explore the possibility of working towards the healthy living award.



MEARNS AND COASTAL HEALTHY LIVING NETWORK

# Lunch club futures

Some lunch clubs are facing cuts and falling numbers of members; others are growing from strength to strength. In some areas older people speak of not wanting to attend a lunch club; in others the importance of the club and how they rely on the opportunities the lunch club offers.

What is clear is that lunch clubs can play an important role in supporting older people to remain at home, foster community links and maintain their health and well-being. They fit well into preventative approaches designed to optimise independence.

Lunch clubs are relatively simple to set up and can be very adaptable to the resources available within any given community either geographical or shared interest. They also mobilise a huge volunteer effort mainly provided by older people themselves.

Some key lessons can be drawn from the experience of groups covered in this publication.

## **Involve older people**

The importance of older people being at the centre of the development and planning of lunch clubs for their community. Those that appear most vibrant are clubs that have been planned by and are run by local older people.

## **Remove barriers to access**

This may be the need for professional assessment before an individual can join a club or the need for transport. The very term lunch club may also act as a barrier to some older people. In Castlemilk the focus is on developing a community café, open to the wider community but with special rates for Pensioners Action Centre members. Others have suggested ideas of a community food hub, a central place in each community where older people can access affordable, good quality meals.

## **Focus on the food**

For some older people their lunch club meal can be their only freshly cooked meal of the week and for most it is their main meal of the day. This provides an opportunity to ensure that what is offered is as nutritious as possible and that there is some choice. Some lunch clubs are experimenting with healthier versions of traditional foods and some based in community cafés are working with the healthyliving award to ensure members can access healthy choices.

## **Maximise the social opportunities**

Given the importance of the social aspects of lunch clubs, it is useful to think about how to maximise opportunities for building links and social interaction. Some clubs include activities alongside lunch and look to link members into other local activities.

## **Build in the support that is needed**

The examples suggest that all lunch clubs need some form of start up support and benefit from ongoing low level developmental and volunteer support. Start up support often includes funding for basic equipment, insurance, volunteer training and disclosure checks. This is often provided by local authority community development staff, local or national voluntary organisations. All of which need to be resourced to provide this.



# Useful Information and Resources

## Reports

Older People Living in the Community - Nutritional Needs, Barriers and Interventions: a Literature Review. [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/12/07101949/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/12/07101949/0)

Preventing malnutrition in later life – the role of community food projects. Age Concern, Help the Aged 2009. [http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/health-and-wellbeing/115\\_0609\\_preventing\\_malnutrition\\_in\\_later\\_life\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_community\\_food\\_projects\\_2009\\_pro.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/health-and-wellbeing/115_0609_preventing_malnutrition_in_later_life_the_role_of_community_food_projects_2009_pro.pdf?dtrk=true)

Food services for older people in the community 2011 ODS Consulting. [www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk)

## Practice Guides

Eating well for older people. The Caroline Walker Trust (2004) [www.cwt.org.uk](http://www.cwt.org.uk)

Eating well for older people with dementia. VOICES [www.cwt.org.uk](http://www.cwt.org.uk)

## Useful websites

healthyliving award [www.healthylivingaward.co.uk](http://www.healthylivingaward.co.uk)

Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme [www.pvgschemescotland.org](http://www.pvgschemescotland.org)

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**Fiona Hamilton** - Lets Make it Better

**Pat Kendal** - Alyth Senior Citizen's Lunch and Socialising Club

**Rahat Syed** - Minority Ethnic Day Activity Centre, Dixon Community

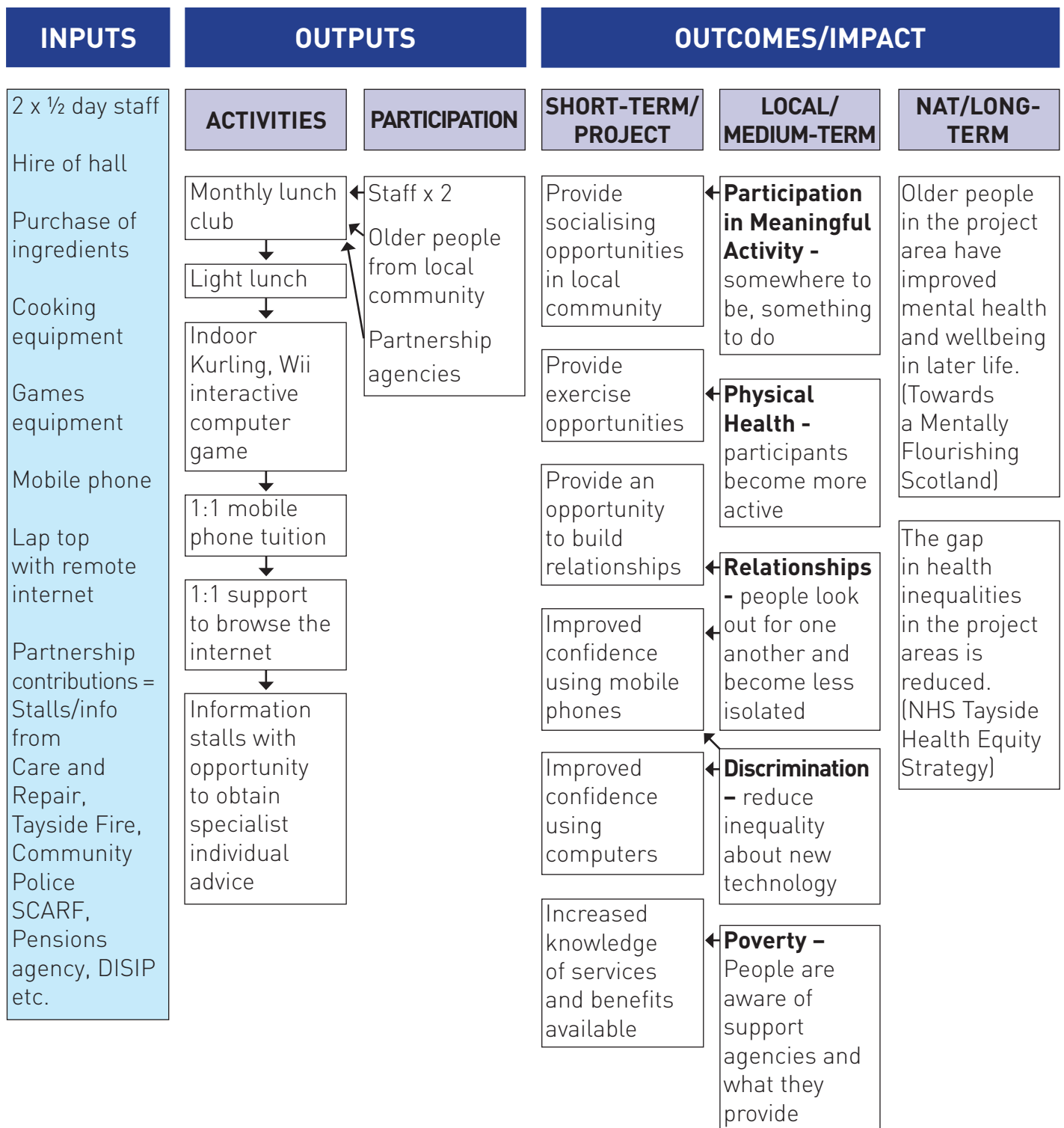
**Abbie Riddell** - Lossiemouth Senior Citizens Luncheon Club

**Melanie O'Donnell** - Castlemilk Pensioners Action Group

**Anne-Marie Sandison** - Consumer Focus Scotland

# Appendix 1

## LOGIC MODEL



Programme: Perth & Kinross Healthy Communities Collaborative  
 Situation: Lunch clubs  
 J Doe, 2010



THE DIXON COMMUNITY MINORITY ETHNIC DAY CARE ACTIVITY CENTRE



**community  
food and health**

(scotland)

### **About us:**

Community Food and Health (Scotland) aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. We do this by supporting work with and within low-income communities that addresses health inequalities and barriers to healthy and affordable food.

Barriers being addressed by community based initiatives are:

**Availability** – increasing access to fruit and vegetables of an acceptable quality and cost

**Affordability** – tackling not only the cost of shopping, but also getting to the shops

**Skills** – improving confidence and skills in cooking and shopping

**Culture** – overcoming ingrained habits

Through our work we aim to support communities to:

- identify barriers to a healthy balanced diet
- develop local responses to addressing these barriers, and
- highlight where actions at other levels, or in other sectors are required

We value the experience, understanding skills and knowledge within Scotland's community food initiatives and their unique contribution to developing and delivering policy and practice at all levels.

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